Kalamazoo Promise

Can a Universal College Scholarship Reform Urban Education?

Academic optimism has unlocked and unleashed the aspirations of teachers, parents, and students in an urban district in the Midwest.

By Gary Miron, Jeffrey N. Jones, and Allison J. Kelaher-Young

Mike Lanka/Western Michigan University

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, President Barack Obama, and Kalamazoo Public Schools Superintendent Michael Rice congratulate graduates at Kalamazoo Central High School.

In June, President Obama delivered the first-ever graduation speech by a sitting president to public high school students when he spoke to graduates of Kalamazoo Central High School in Michigan. This was the culmination of the Race to the Top Commencement Challenge in which high schools around the country vied for the opportunity to have the President speak at graduation ceremonies. For an urban high school that once might have been labeled a "dropout factory," this was a big event.

"America has a lot to learn from Kalamazoo Central about what makes for a successful school in this new century," the President said. "You've got educators raising standards and then inspiring their students to

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meet them. You've got community members who are stepping up as tutors and mentors and coaches. You've got parents who are taking an active interest in their child's education."

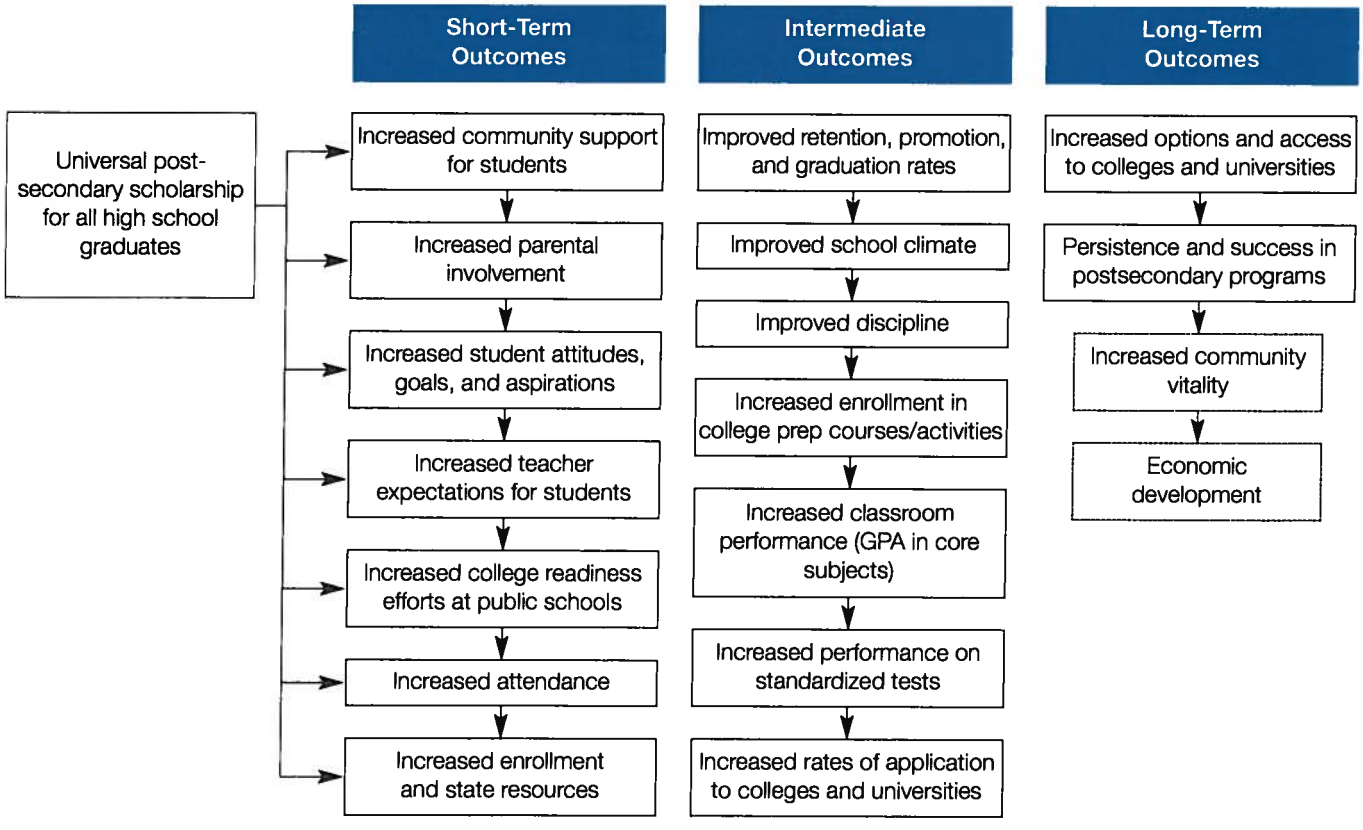
And the President noted something else: the Kalamazoo Promise, the community's universal postsecondary scholarship program. Launched in fall 2005 with backing from anonymous donors, the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship provides full tuition for any high school graduate who's been accepted to attend a state-supported Michigan postsecondary institution — whether a community college, trade school, or university. The Promise has made it possible for hundreds of students to continue their education who in the past would probably never have gotten more than a high school diploma. But it's done far more than that. A federally sponsored evaluation has shown that the Promise has been a catalyst for systemic reform, bringing together educators, students, their parents, and the broader community to focus on a common goal: success for all students — not just in high school, but through the college years.

Comprehensive school reform models, or more broadly defined systemic reforms, tend to be highly prescriptive: Outsiders come into a system and tell professionals what they must do to improve school quality and effectiveness. Specific interventions and services, designed for each stakeholder group, are implemented. Typically, these reform models call for professional and leadership development, activities to reach parents and encourage their involvement, and extensive changes to the curriculum. Although many of the packaged reform models are believed to be research based, they get mixed results during implementation. As reformers have learned, creating the synergy needed to bring about and sustain change in struggling urban school districts is difficult and expensive.

The Kalamazoo Promise approached change from an entirely different direction. The Promise pointed to the desired outcomes but did not specify what the district would have to do to achieve them. Instead, it assumed that a strong incentive, such as a universal scholarship program, would prompt diverse stakeholders to work together and figure out what a district needed to do to enable more students to take advantage of the scholarship program. Essentially, what's between the boxes or cells in Figure 1 is what the professionals had to sort out. And they did.

FIG. 1

Outcomes Logic Model for the Kalamazoo Promise Scholarship Program



CHANGE BEGINS

The Promise changed the city and the public schools of Kalamazoo from the day it was announced in November 2005. Its first impact was to lift student aspirations and teacher expectations. It also helped motivate the Kalamazoo Public Schools to take necessary steps to assess and modify the school system so that it could serve the broader goal of preparing more students for success in postsecondary education. (See sidebar.) The process of review, assessment, and then the implementation of new programs mirrors what the authors of externally mandated and funded reform initiatives strive to achieve. But, in this instance, the change was driven by internal initiative rather than an intervention driven from the outside.

The reform process in Kalamazoo Public Schools differs because the district's changes are initiated from within and have widespread support and a strong sense of ownership.

Surveys of students and teachers helped evaluators determine the effectiveness of district reforms in reaching desired outcomes. Interviews with school administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, students, parents, and representatives of community organizations further put the survey findings in context and gave insight into the Promise scholarship program's influence on the experiences of key stakeholders. School and community indicators have been analyzed and compared with those of similar Michigan schools and districts. The results have been promising — and concrete.

PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The community greeted the announcement of the Promise with incredible enthusiasm. Educators reported that parents initially responded more strongly than did students. Parents said they were more focused on their children's school work and were enforcing more social and academic discipline at home.

Community organizations created new or expanded programming for such services as tutoring and providing material aid to families in poverty, all in order to offer more support for students. Tutoring and mentoring programs in particular noted a rapid and marked increase in recruits. Community secular and faith-based organizations reported that the Promise had inspired them to implement changes.

Kalamazoo Public Schools At a Glance

The Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) is a medium-sized, urban school district serving 12,300 students in the city of Kalamazoo and three townships. Challenged economically like other post-industrial urban areas, KPS is a majority-minority district: 48% African-American, 39% white, 10% Hispanic/Latino, 2% Asian-American, and 1% Native American. Fully 70% of the district's students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Since the Kalamazoo Promise was introduced in November 2005, KPS has grown by 2,100 students and is expected to continue growing. Even as it grows, the district's ethnic composition has stayed about the same, but the proportion of students qualifying for free/reduced-priced lunch has risen from 62% in fall 2005 to 70% in fall 2009.

Below are selected reforms and accomplishments, the result of tremendous staff and community dedication and collaboration with many district partners.

Selected Reforms and Accomplishments, 2007 to the Present

Preschool

- Partnered with Kalamazoo County Head Start and other local preschool providers to adopt the nationally recognized OWL curriculum and to provide joint professional development.
- Helped to spearhead the drive to create universal preschool in Kalamazoo County.

Elementary

- Expanded full-day kindergarten from 176 to 1,062 students in the last three years.
- Reworked the K-3 reading block to include 30 minutes of daily work on writing.
- Adopted new math materials for grades K-5 for the first time since 1992.
- Wrote curriculum guides in language arts and math for grades K-5.
- Opened Prairie Ridge, the first newly constructed school facility in KPS since 1972 and the first K-12 LEED-certified gold school in Michigan.
- Began El Sol Elementary, a dual-language (English-Spanish) school.

• Consolidated bilingual education/ESL programs from 17 to 10 elementary schools for the purpose of greater program efficiency and effectiveness.

Middle school

- Moved 6th grade to middle school to provide 6th graders with teachers who specialize in their subjects.
- Started algebra class for 8th graders, taken by 343 students this year.
- Sent all incoming 6th graders a book every 10 days to read over the summer.
- Created a program for each middle school grade to get students thinking about college and careers.
- Created a middle school alternative learning program for students with behavioral or academic issues.
- Opened Linden Grove Middle School, the second newly constructed school in KPS since 1972.
- Adopted new math materials for grades 6-8.
- Revamped the middle-school schedule for the first time since 1985 — to create longer periods to provide more time for core subjects and to require students to schedule two class periods a day in language arts and mathematics if they are below grade level.

High school

- From September 2007 to September 2009, increased the number of distinct Advanced Placement (AP) subjects from 8 to 12. During this time, the number of students taking AP courses increased by 71%, the number of AP courses taken increased by 79%, and the number of low-income, African-American, and Latino students taking AP courses increased by 148%, 166%, and 400%, respectively.
- Added pluses and minuses to grades. Weighted AP grades to reflect more challenging content so that an AP "B" is equivalent to a regular class "A" in order to create an incentive for students to enroll in AP programs.
- Changed from a four-period block schedule to a five-period trimester system, which provides more continuity for students and more opportunities to meet Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements, to take AP courses, and to make up failed courses. The former schedule dates back to 1999.

Mike Lanka/Western Michigan University

Kalamazoo Central Principal Von Washington Jr., President Barack Obama, and Kalamazoo Public Schools Superintendent Michael Rice at the Kalamazoo Central High School graduation.

Across the district

- Increased state reading and math test scores at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- Contracted for a Phi Delta Kappa curriculum audit to identify issues with the curriculum.
- With 250 staff and community volunteers, created strategic plan cognitive/academic and behavior expectations for students at every age of their development, ages 0 to 18, and for the adults that support children: parents, staff, and other community members.
- Overhauled and expanded summer school.
- Won an array of grants on behalf of the district, including a $9 million federal magnet school grant, a $7.5 million federal 21st Century grant (partnership with Kalamazoo Communities in Schools), and two Kellogg Foundation grants for a summer literacy program and a broad literacy initiative in the community.
- Contracted for a complete facilities study.
- Adopted a districtwide homework policy that encourages meaningful and engaging homework for all students.
- Began to partner with the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, and Western Michigan University on a multi-year math and science teacher fellowship program to improve math and science teaching in areas of high need.
- Redrew middle and high school boundaries to achieve greater socioeconomic balance.
- Began to recognize "turnaround students" at board meetings for substantial changes in academic performance.

Michael F. Rice, superintendent,
Kalamazoo Public Schools

In Kalamazoo, the change was driven by internal initiative rather than an intervention driven from the outside.

Support has also translated to votes to approve bond requests to build two new schools and renovate and expand existing buildings.

The Promise has leveraged increased volunteerism in the community, and the changes the Promise has helped promote have fostered goodwill, generosity, and increased commitment to children. Still, obstacles remain that hinder community response, and addressing them will be important. In particular, it will be critical to communicate and share more information to address misconceptions, build trust, and better coordinate services. Also, new strategies and increased efforts are needed to reach and support Latino families. Community groups have already done a great deal, but most agree that much more still needs to be done to support students and families in poverty.

To read more about the Kalamazoo Promise
Working papers and research results can be obtained from the following web sites:

Kalamazoo Promise
Provides information about how the Promise operates.
www.kalamazoopromise.com

Kalamazoo Promise Evaluation
Provides information about the ongoing evaluation of the Promise.
www.wmich.edu/kpromise

W.E. Upjohn Institute
Provides information and research related to the Promise.
www.upjohninst.org/kalamazoopromise.html

PERCEPTIONS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL CHANGES

Soon after the announcement of the Promise, changes began at the school, classroom, and student levels. Perceptions of school climate began to shift. Our findings also revealed increased teacher expectations and student aspirations. These important developments indicate that this program can influence interests and values, school achievement, and future goals.

School-level changes. School climate encompasses enduring patterns of behavior and interaction in the school environment influenced by shared beliefs, values, and attitudes. Where climate is positive, achievement, attendance, student engagement, expectations, competence, esteem, and self-concept all rise. A principal described how the Promise was part of an improved climate in the Kalamazoo schools:

> At least in our building, there's a renewed sense of urgency. And that's not a negative thing. It's not, "Oh my gosh, I've got to do something!" Not a panic. It's "OK, so this is a new day, this is a new battle, and we're getting recharged, we're getting renewed, we're getting invigorated, and we're gonna take it on." . . . It renews your excitement.

The excitement and renewal, in turn, has an impact on longstanding, difficult aspects of the school environment, such as behavioral norms and creating a pro-academic culture that values and embraces postsecondary opportunities

Classroom changes. One of the greatest effects of the Promise has been in raising real and perceived expectations for students. Teacher expectations are an important component of a high-quality classroom learning experience, and differential expectations are known to affect achievement outcomes.

Teachers communicate their expectations of students in many ways, verbal and nonverbal. How they instruct students and run their classrooms gives students very clear, albeit implicit, messages about what is, or isn't, expected of them. Teachers reported that the Promise helped trigger changes in their own instructional discourse:

> Just saying you're going to need this when you go on past high school. I want to get you well prepared; just that conscious speech both conversational and otherwise. (Middle school teacher)

Overall, teachers reported an increased focus on instructional activities and support for students (Jones, Miron, and Kelaher-Young in press). And students notice these changes in teachers' expectations and report a clear message that teachers are setting higher standards. These include an increased level of challenge, a sense that college is now an option for everyone, increased support from teachers, changes in teachers' encouragement and instruction, a raised level of behavioral expectations, and the desire to see students take full advantage of the collegiate program.

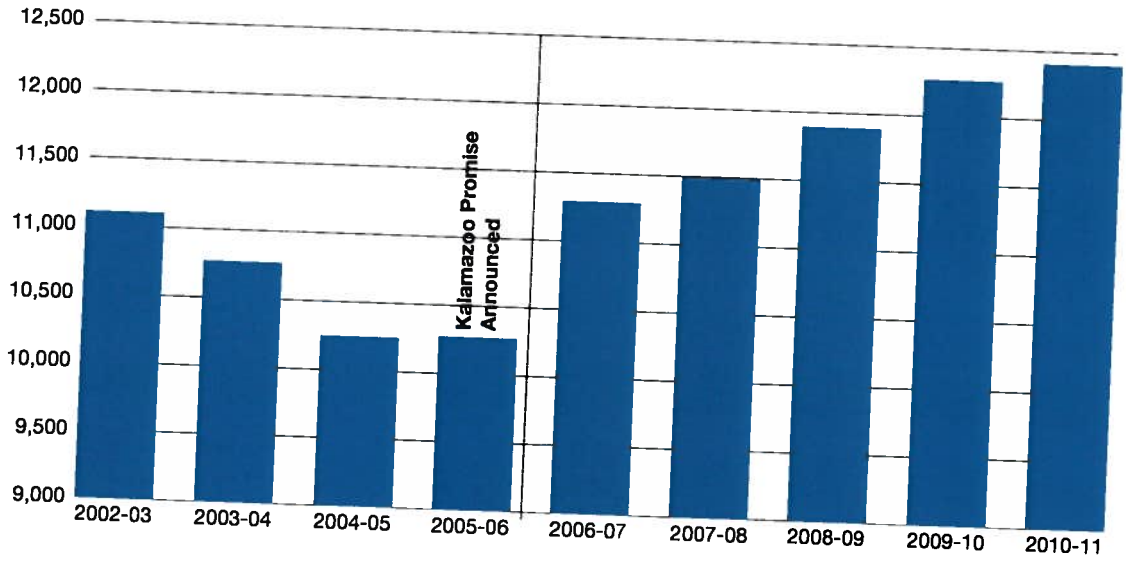
In addition to increased expectations of students, teachers also reported being more motivated and supported. In the words of a high school English teacher:

> It [the Promise] told us that people have faith in the school system. They have faith in the teachers. . . . We were able to say, "Well, we must be doing something right." It's been a hard decade in education. But we are making a difference. It's nice to get that support. It's encouraging.

Student-level changes. Student attitudes, goals, and aspirations also improved (Miron, Jones, and

FIG. 2

Enrollment in Kalamazoo Public Schools Before and After the Kalamazoo Promise



Kelaher-Young 2009). Aspirations serve to guide and shape the learning process because they involve identifying short-term and long-term goals as well as marshalling the resources to achieve them. Student aspirations are also associated with improved student psychological well-being and educational attainment. All students reported at least some positive change in their own aspirations or those of their peers since the announcement of the Promise. Many noted related behavioral changes, such as students taking more challenging and advanced courses:

> It seemed like I saw more people dedicated in school and working and all that stuff. I see a lot more people going to college and taking summer classes and just getting so pumped. More than it was before. (High school student)

> Some students never really did their work. Now they work harder and are more successful since the Promise. (High school student)

Educators have seen students taking ownership, reviewing priorities, and raising their own academic expectations. They report increased college-prep conversations, a "willingness to try" postsecondary education, and increased student responsibility in school.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Beyond such psychosocial changes in the classroom and across the school, other outcomes show that students are changing their behavior. First and foremost, we know that — depending on the year — between 83% and 85% of the eligible high school graduates are taking advantage of the scholarship, with others enrolling in private or out-of-state public universities. While the initial cohorts experienced lower than average rates of college retention, this indicator has improved over time as students are increasingly better prepared for postsecondary education. Of scholarship recipients, about two-thirds attended a four-year public university in Michigan, with about one-third taking classes at the community college level. To date, more than 1,500 students have applied the Kalamazoo Promise to their education.

Students reported that teachers were setting higher standards; teachers said they felt more motivated and supported as a result of the Promise.

Before the announcement of the Promise, the school district — consistent with comparable districts in the region and state — was experiencing declining enrollments. Since the announcement, that trend has reversed, with enrollment in the district increasing 17%. One reason is an influx of new students, especially in the first year. More important, though, is a reduction in dropout or exit rates (Bartik, Eberts, and Huang 2010; Miron and Cullen 2008). This is a dramatic contrast to surrounding and similar school districts, where enrollments generally

continue to decline. In addition, the increased Kalamazoo enrollment has yielded a noteworthy fiscal increase in state funding: The 2,100 students that have been retained or attracted to the district represent more than $15 million in state aid to help educate the new students.

Hope has also allowed educators to believe that the new changes being implemented can truly lead to new opportunities for all students.

In the local schools, there were a large number of changes that aimed to better prepare students for success in college, including a 71% increase in the number of students enrolled in an AP course and substantially larger increases for minority and low-income students. There have also been steady and noteworthy improvements in student achievement as measured by state assessments (Bartik, Eberts, and Huang 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last four years, we've learned that a key ingredient for successful change is hope. Hope was not something anticipated in the outcomes logic model, but it came up again and again in interviews with stakeholders. This academic optimism has unlocked and unleashed the aspirations of parents and students. Hope has also allowed educators to believe that the new changes being implemented can truly lead to new opportunities for all students.

Substantial attention has been given to comprehensive school reform models as well as models for systemic change. Systemic reforms seek to transform schools, build synergy, and establish change by affecting multiple components or structures of the system at the same time. Systemic change occurs when all parts of the system are aligned and all stakeholder groups are focused on the same outcome. We're witnessing this change through parent involvement and community response and in the increased empowerment, higher expectations, aspirations, and hope at the classroom and school level. Increased enrollment in district schools, increased enrollment in college prep activities, and increased college-going rates and success in postsecondary education are further indicators. To date, more than 1,500 students have taken advantage of this scholarship program, and further study will track the longer-term impacts on individual students and the community.

Across the country, evidence from evaluations of systemic initiatives and the implementation of comprehensive reform models is mixed — in part because of issues related to sustainability and ownership of the reforms. The reform process in Kalamazoo Public Schools differs because the district's changes are initiated from within and have widespread support and a strong sense of ownership. Furthermore, they're not dependent on recurring funding needed to redesign and sustain new programs.

From interviews and survey data, we found that the Kalamazoo Promise has helped to establish a unified focus on improved academic performance and readiness for college. The Promise has also been repeatedly linked to the changes seen in the community and in the schools. Diverse stakeholders are more united in a common goal, and a college-going culture is being established in a struggling urban district. In only three years since high schools in the district were labeled "dropout factories," President Obama has recognized one of the high schools, the district, and the community for its efforts to prepare students for postsecondary opportunities.

Dozens of other communities, moved by the success of the Kalamazoo Promise, now seek to replicate the idea. Already, districts such as Denver, Colo., Pittsburgh, Pa., and El Dorado, Ark., have implemented similar programs. Although the findings from these communities are preliminary, they're largely positive. The success of the Kalamazoo Promise and other related scholarship programs suggests an alternative tool and focus for urban school reformers to consider more closely: the relevance and cost-effectiveness of universal scholarship programs. K

REFERENCES

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Kalamazoo Public Schools: Progress Toward a College-Going Culture
Testimony Before the House Education Committee
Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., Superintendent, Kalamazoo Public Schools
November 29, 2011

I. Progress in the Last Few Years

A. MEAP Increases Four Years in a Row in Reading and Math at the Elementary and Middle School Levels
B. First Newly Constructed School Since 1972 (Prairie Ridge Elementary School) – September 2008
C. Second Newly Constructed School Since 1972 (Linden Grove Middle School) – September 2009
D. El Sol (Spanish/English Dual Language) Elementary School—September 2008
E. Middle School Alternative Learning Program—September 2008
F. Development of Expectations for Children at Every Age of Their Development, 0-18, and for the Adults that Support Children: Parents, Educators, Support Staff, and Community Members (Developed with the participation of 250 community and staff members)—April 2008
G. PDK Curriculum Management Audit (Developed with the input of 400 community and staff members)—May 2008
H. BOE Long-Term District Goals Established—December 2008
I. Four-Year Increases in the Number of Advanced Placement (AP) Students (178% increase), the Number of AP Courses Taken (225% increase), and the Numbers of Economically Disadvantaged, African-American, and Hispanic Students Taking AP Courses (408%, 317%, and 875%, Respectively)—September 2007 to September 2011
J. Three-Year Increase of 211 in the Number of AP Tests Receiving a Score Generating College Credit—May 2008 to May 2011
K. Addition of the Following Advanced Placement courses: Spanish, Art History, U.S. Government and Politics, Psychology, English Literature and Composition, English Language and Composition, World History, Studio Art Portfolio, and Statistics – September 2008 to Present
L. Adoption of the Nationally Recognized OWL Pre-School Curriculum in a Curriculum and Professional Development

Collaboration with Four Other Pre-School Providers—September 2008

M. First, Second, and Third Annual *Early Childhood Rocks!* Conferences, with 17 Other Pre-School Providers in Attendance—May 2009, May 2010, and May 2011

N. Ongoing Development of the Kalamazoo County Committee on Early Childhood Education (KCCECE) and KC Ready 4s—January 2009 to the Present

O. Expansion of Full-Day Kindergarten from 176 to 1054 Students, with the Use of Federal Title I Funds for the Extended Day Portion of Full-Day Kindergarten—September 2007 to Present

P. Creation of a 30-Minute Writing Block from a 120-Minute Reading Block—September 2008

Q. Adoption and Implementation of New K-5 Math Materials for the First Time in 17 Years—April and September 2009

R. Adoption and Implementation of New 6-8 Math Materials – April and September 2010

S. Writing of and Professional Development Associated with K-5 English Language Arts and Math Curriculum Guides—April 2009 to the Present

T. Implementation of Weighted Grades—September 2008 and September 2010—and Plusses/Minuses for Grades—September 2008

U. Approval of an $11 Million Countywide Enhancement Millage Renewal, (KPS Share = $3.9 Million)—May 2008 and May 2011

V. Ongoing Creation of a Community Literacy Initiative with Many Community Partners—January 2008 to Present

W. Receipt of a $40,000 Kellogg Foundation Summer Literacy Grant—May 2008

X. Receipt of a $150,000 Kellogg Foundation Seven-Area Literacy Planning Grant—May 2009

Y. Receipt of a $9 Million Federal Magnet Grant—September 2007

Z. Creation of Various Communication Vehicles (PAC, TAC, SACs, Key Communicators, Union Leadership, and Instructional Leadership I-II-III, Among Others)—Fall 2007

AA. Adoption and Implementation of a Five-Period, Three-Trimester High School Schedule, from a Four-Period, Two-Semester Schedule—September 2009 and September 2010 (First New Schedule Since 1999)

BB. Adoption and Implementation of a Six-Period Middle School Schedule, from a Seven-Period Schedule—March and September 2010 (First New Schedule Since 1985)

CC. Adoption and Implementation of Middle and High School Boundary Changes Associated with Socioeconomic Status—February and September 2009

DD. Community Mentoring and Tutoring Partnership of More Than Two Dozen Agencies/Organizations—December 2007

EE. Receipt of Five-Year 21st Century Grants, in Partnership with Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo ($7.5 Million)—June 2009

FF. W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Woodrow Wilson Michigan Teaching Fellowships in Math and Science--Five School Districts and Six Universities in the State Selected to Participate in the Fellowship Program—January 2010

GG. Planning for and Implementation of the Consolidation from 17 to 10 Elementary School Sites for Bilingual/ESL Services—Spring and September 2010

HH. Passage of a $62 Million Bond (Replacement of a WWI-Era Elementary School and Additions onto Two Middle Schools, Along with Other Capital Projects)—May 2010

II. Extensive Collaboration on Secondary School Schedules, Health Insurance, and Other Issues with the Teachers' Association and Other Associations

Testimony Before the Michigan House of Representatives on Senate Bill 618
Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., Superintendent, Kalamazoo Public Schools
Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, good morning. My name is Michael Rice, and I am the superintendent of the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), one of the fastest growing and one of the 15 largest districts in the state. KPS educates almost 13,000 students pre-K through 12th grade. We are a typical urban district in many ways. Sixty-nine percent of our students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. We are 44 percent African-American, 39 percent white, 10 percent Hispanic, 4 percent multiracial, 2 percent Asian-American, and 1 percent Native American. Indeed, ethnically we are virtually exactly what we were six years ago prior to the advent of the Kalamazoo Promise. Socioeconomically, we are poorer, with our free and reduced-price lunch eligibility having slipped from 62 percent to 69 percent in six years.

More importantly, since November 2005, we have had 6 consecutive years of rising enrollment--a total increase of approximately 2,400 students. We have also had four years of rising elementary and middle school reading and math achievement.

During the last four years, we have increased by 178 percent the number of students taking high school Advanced Placement (AP) courses and by 225 percent the number of AP courses our students take. We have constructed the first two new schools in the district since 1972, have opened a dual language (English-Spanish) school and a middle school alternative school, have begun full-day kindergarten with federal Title I funds for the expanded day portion of the day, and engaged the community in a host of ways to support our schools.

In the last three years, in spite of our rising enrollment, we have approved budget gap-closing of almost $13 million in total. On a budget base of $130 million, this is substantial, particularly in a district that cut almost $20 million in the seven years pre-Promise.

One more fact: Over the last decade or so, three charter schools have closed in Kalamazoo, two before the advent of the Promise. There remains just a single charter school in Kalamazoo, with two small charter schools just across our borders in other jurisdictions.

I am testifying in opposition to SB 618 regarding the expansion of charter schools in the state. In this effort, I am representing all 10 superintendents in Kalamazoo County, who are opposed to this legislation. My opposition is on two grounds: (1) the absence of a strong

research base to justify the expansion of charters, and (2) the absence of substantial support for charters in the last several years in Michigan, particularly in and around Detroit.

On the first point--the absence of a strong research base to justify the expansion of charters--I have copied and included in your packets the testimony of Western Michigan University Professor Gary Miron's testimony before the Senate Education Committee on September 27. Dr. Miron is one of the foremost researchers on charter schools in the country, and has performed research for both charter school proponents and opponents. Dr. Miron's testimony synthesizes a great deal of the research on charter schools nationally and is in strong opposition to the unlimited expansion of charter schools.

Similarly, I have copied and included in your packets a meta-analysis of charter school research from 16 states, produced by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University. The study shows that 1/6 of charter schools nationally provide better results than their traditional public school counterparts, 1/3 nationally generate worse results, and 1/2 do neither statistically better nor worse. This is hardly the sort of record to justify the unlimited expansion of anything, let alone unlimited expansion of charter schools.

On the second point--the absence of substantial support for charters generally in Michigan, particularly in and around Detroit--I ask for the research, not the anecdotes, not the stories, but the legitimate academic research that shows that students' education in areas with charter schools in the state, especially urban areas like Detroit and Lansing, has benefited from the presence of charter schools. Urban districts across the state have had a number of charters compete with them over the last decade. Where is the evidence that education in the Detroit Metro Area, in Lansing, in Flint, in Saginaw, in Grand Rapids, has improved with charter schools in the last several years? There is no such evidence. Certainly, there are strong charter schools, but it makes no sense to permit unlimited expansion of charter schools simply because there exist some strong charter schools, in the face of evidence that shows that the vast majority of charter schools are at best no better than their traditional counterparts and at worst worse than traditional public schools.

Your packets today include the following: a copy of Western Michigan University Professor Gary Miron's September 27, 2011 testimony before the Senate Education Committee on Senate Bills 618-624; a copy of the executive summary of "Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States," a 2009 study from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University; an article on the Kalamazoo Promise and the Kalamazoo Public Schools from the national magazine Kappan; and an outline of activities to improve education with the KPS community in the last few years.

You have an opportunity in your vote on SB 618 to demonstrate whether you are pursuing research-based work in education, or whether you are simply pursuing a pre-determined agenda. If you are basing your judgment on research, it is clear that you should not approve SB 618. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Multiple Choice:
Charter School Performance in 16 States

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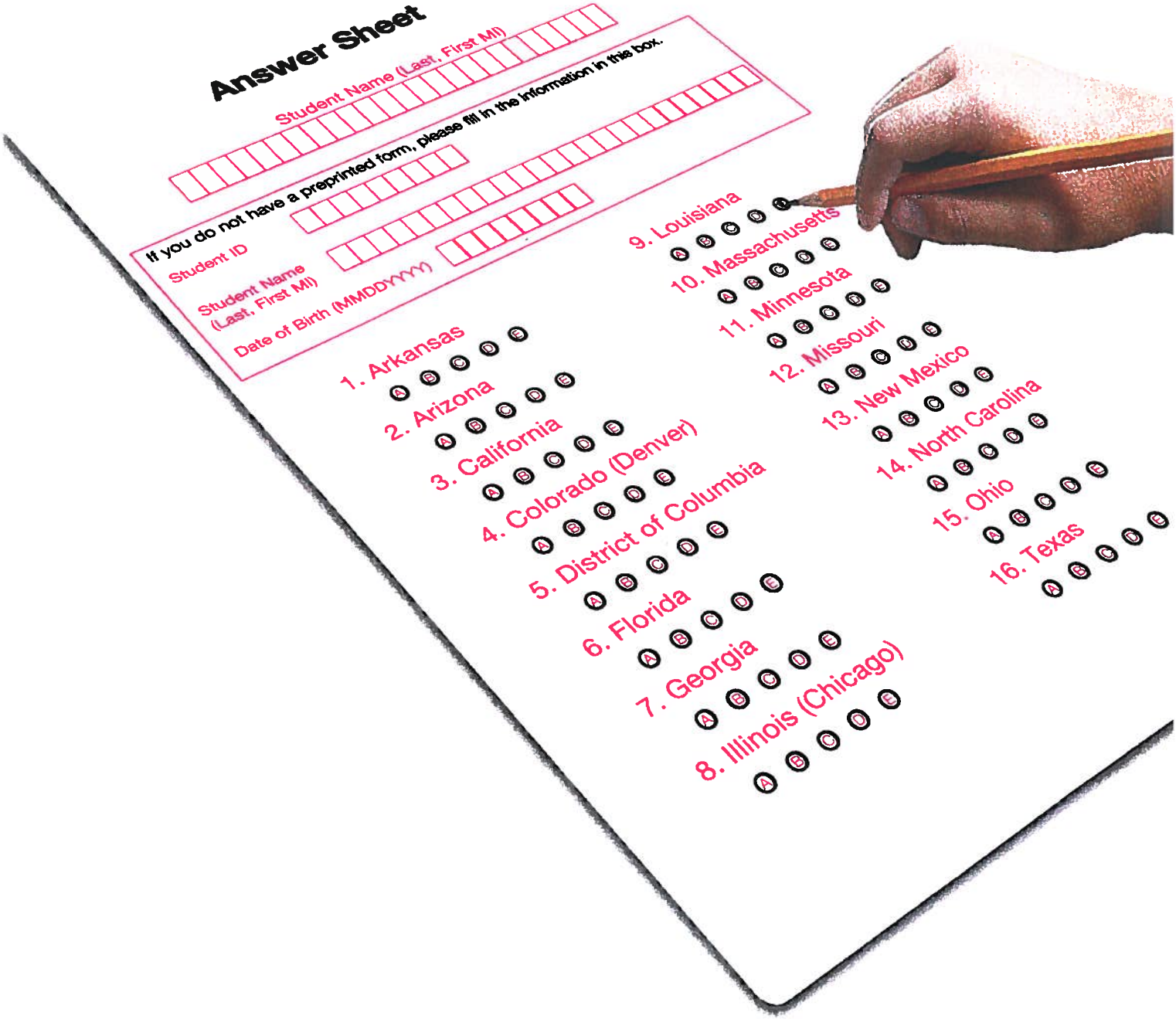


Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO)
Stanford University
Stanford, CA
http://credo.stanford.edu
June 2009

CREDO gratefully acknowledges the support of the State Education Agencies and School Districts who contributed their data to this partnership.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

As charter schools play an increasingly central role in education reform agendas across the United States, it becomes more important to have current and comprehensible analysis about how well they do educating their students. Thanks to progress in student data systems and regular student achievement testing, it is possible to examine student learning in charter schools and compare it to the experience the students would have had in the traditional public schools (TPS) they would otherwise have attended. This report presents a longitudinal student-level analysis of charter school impacts on more than 70 percent of the students in charter schools in the United States. The scope of the study makes it the first national assessment of charter school impacts.

Charter schools are permitted to select their focus, environment and operations and wide diversity exists across the sector. This study provides an overview that aggregates charter schools in different ways to examine different facets of their impact on student academic growth.

The group portrait shows wide variation in performance. The study reveals that a decent fraction of charter schools, 17 percent, provide superior education opportunities for their students. Nearly half of the charter schools nationwide have results that are no different from the local public school options and over a third, 37 percent, deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their student would have realized had they remained in traditional public schools. These findings underlie the parallel findings of significant state-by-state differences in charter school performance and in the national aggregate performance of charter schools. The policy challenge is how to deal constructively with varying levels of performance today and into the future.

PROJECT APPROACH

CREDO has partnered with 15 states and the District of Columbia to consolidate longitudinal student-level achievement data for the purposes of creating a national pooled analysis of the impact of charter schooling on student learning gains. For each charter school student, a virtual twin is created based on students who match the charter student's demographics, English language proficiency and participation in special education or subsidized lunch programs. Virtual twins were developed for 84 percent of all the students in charter schools. The resulting matched longitudinal comparison is used to test whether students who attend charter schools fare better than if they had instead attended traditional public schools in their community. The outcome of interest is academic learning gains in reading and math, measured in standard deviation units.

Student academic learning gains on reading and math state achievement tests were examined in three ways: a pooled nationwide analysis of charter school impacts, a state-by-state analysis of charter school results, and an examination of the performance of charter schools against their local alternatives.

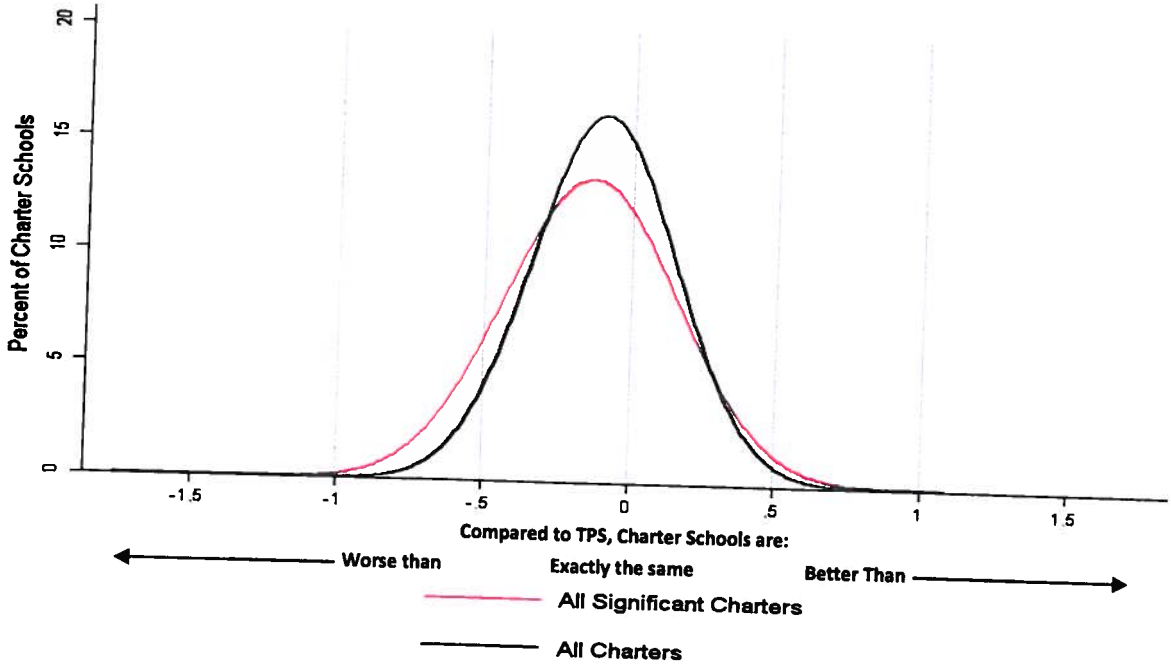
In all cases, the outcome of interest is the magnitude of student learning that occurs in charter school students compared to their traditional public school virtual twins. Each analysis looks at the impact of a variety of factors on charter school student learning: the state where the student resides, the school's grade-span, the student's background, time in charter schools, and a number of policy characteristics of the charter school environment.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Charter school performance is a complex and difficult matter to assess. Each of the three analyses revealed distinct facets of charter school performance. In increasing levels of aggregation, from the head-to-head comparisons within communities to the pooled national analysis, the results are presented below.

When the effect of charter schools on student learning is compared to the experience the students would have realized in their local traditional public schools, the result can be graphed in a point-in-time Quality Curve that relates the average math growth in each charter school to the performance their students would have realized in traditional public schools in their immediate community, as measured by the experience of their virtual twins. The Quality Curve displays the distribution of individual charter school performance relative to their TPS counterparts. A score of "0" means there is no difference between the charter school performance and that of their TPS comparison group. More positive values indicate increasingly better performance of charters relative to traditional public school effects and negative values indicate that charter school effects are worse than what was observed for the traditional public school effects.

Charter School Market Fixed Effects Quality Curve



The Quality Curve results are sobering:

- Of the 2403 charter schools reflected on the curve, 46 percent of charter schools have math gains that are statistically indistinguishable from the average growth among their TPS comparisons.
- Charters whose math growth exceeded their TPS equivalent growth by a significant amount account for 17 percent of the total.
- The remaining group, 37 percent of charter schools, posted math gains that were significantly below what their students would have seen if they enrolled in local traditional public schools instead.

The state-by-state analysis showed the following:

- The effectiveness of charter schools was found to vary widely by state. The variation was over and above existing differences among states in their academic results.

  States with significantly higher learning gains for charter school students than would have occurred in traditional schools include:

  - Arkansas
  - Colorado (Denver)
  - Illinois (Chicago)
  - Louisiana
  - Missouri

  The gains in growth ranged from .02 Standard deviations in Illinois (Chicago) to .07 standard deviations in Colorado (Denver).

  States that demonstrated lower average charter school student growth than their peers in traditional schools included:

  - Arizona
  - Florida
  - Minnesota
  - New Mexico
  - Ohio
  - Texas

  In this group, the marginal shift ranged from -.01 in Arizona to -.06 standard deviations in Ohio.

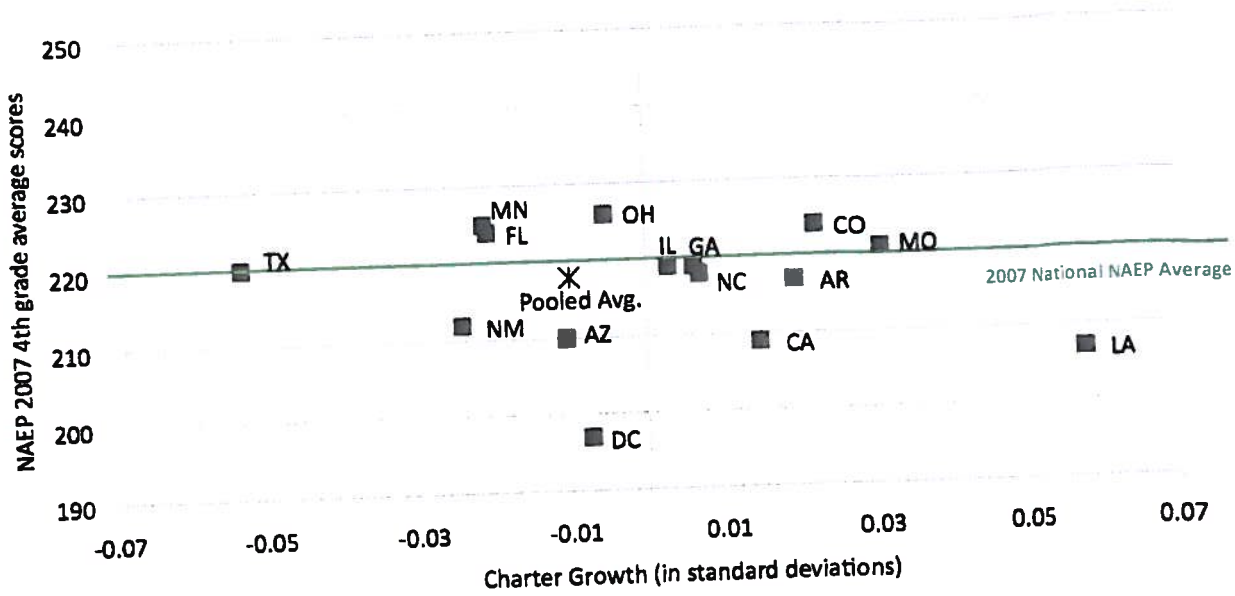
  Four states had mixed results or were no different than the gains for traditional school peers:

  - California
  - District of Columbia
  - Georgia
  - North Carolina

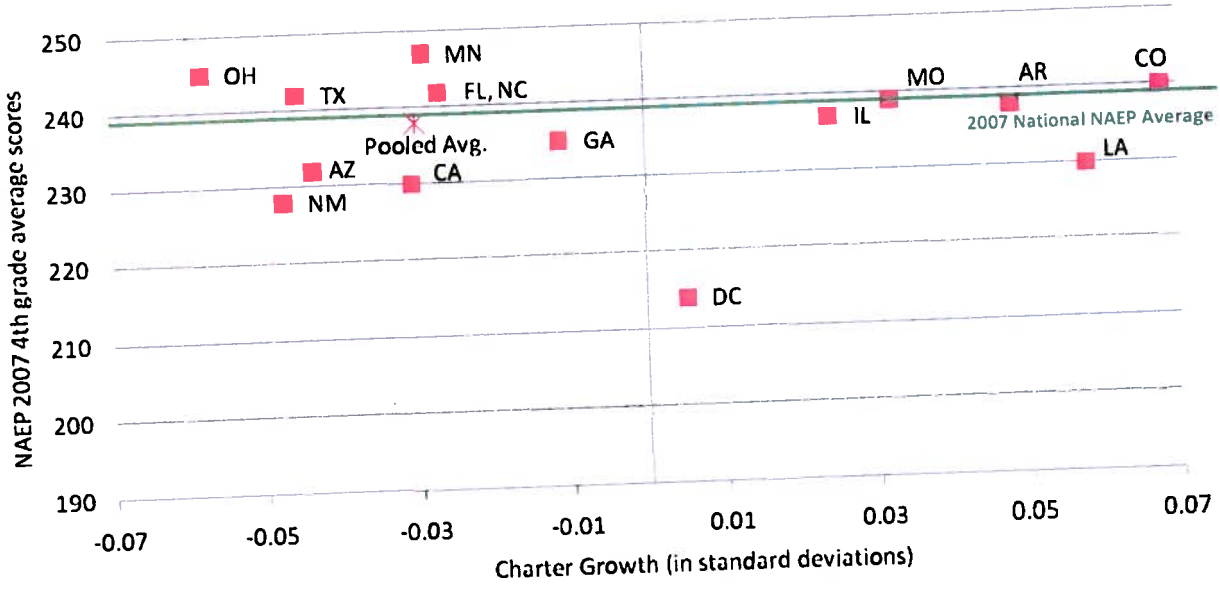
- The academic success of charter school students was found to be affected by the contours of the charter policies under which their schools operate.
- States that have limits on the number of charter schools permitted to operate, known as caps, realize significantly lower academic growth than states without caps, around .03 standard deviations.
- States that empower multiple entities to act as charter school authorizers realize significantly lower growth in academic learning in their students, on the order of -.08 standard deviations. While more research is needed into the causal mechanism, it appears that charter school operators are able to identify and choose the more permissive entity to provide them oversight.
- Where state charter legislation provides an avenue for appeals of adverse decisions on applications or renewals, students realize a small but significant gain in learning, about .02 standard deviations.

To put variation in state results in context, the average charter school gains in reading and math were plotted against the 2007 4th Grade NAEP state averages. The position of the states relative to the national NAEP average and relative to average learning gains tees up important questions about school quality in general and charter school quality specifically.

Charter Growth Compared to 2007 NAEP State by State – Reading



Charter Growth Compared to 2007 NAEP Score by State – Math



The analysis of total charter school effects, pooled student-level data from all of the participating states and examined the aggregate effect of charter schools on student learning. The national pooled analysis of charter school impacts showed the following results:

- Charter school students on average see a decrease in their academic growth in reading of .01 standard deviations compared to their traditional school peers. In math, their learning lags by .03 standard deviations on average. While the magnitude of these effects is small, they are both statistically significant.
- The effects for charter school students are consistent across the spectrum of starting positions. In reading, charter school learning gains are smaller for all students but those whose starting scores are in the lowest or highest deciles. For math, the effect is consistent across the entire range.
- Charter students in elementary and middle school grades have significantly higher rates of learning than their peers in traditional public schools, but students in charter high schools and charter multi-level schools have significantly worse results.
- Charter schools have different impacts on students based on their family backgrounds. For Blacks and Hispanics, their learning gains are significantly worse than that of their traditional school twins. However, charter schools are found to have better academic growth results for students in poverty.

  English Language Learners realize significantly better learning gains in charter schools. Students in Special Education programs have about the same outcomes.

- Students do better in charter schools over time. First year charter students on average experience a decline in learning, which may reflect a combination of mobility effects and the experience of a charter school in its early years. Second and third years in charter schools see a significant reversal to positive gains.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As of 2009, more than 4700 charter schools enroll over 1.4 million children in 40 states and the District of Columbia. The ranks of charters grow by hundreds each year. Even so, more than 365,000 names linger on charter school wait lists. [1] After more than fifteen years, there is no doubt that both supply and demand in the charter sector are strong.

In some ways, however, charter schools are just beginning to come into their own. Charter schools have become a rallying cry for education reformers across the country, with every expectation that they will continue to figure prominently in national educational strategy in the months and years to come. And yet, this study reveals in unmistakable terms that, in the aggregate, charter students are not faring as well as their TPS counterparts. Further, tremendous variation in academic quality among charters is the norm, not the exception. The problem of quality is the most pressing issue that charter schools and their supporters face.

The study findings reported here give the first wide-angle view of the charter school landscape in the United States. It is the first time a sufficiently large body of student-level data has been

[1] National Alliance for Public Charter Schools As of June 3, 2009: http://www.publiccharters.org/aboutschools/benefits

compiled to create findings that could be considered "national" in scope. More important, they provide a broad common yardstick to support on-going conversations about quality and performance. For the first time, the dialog about charter school quality can be married to empirical evidence about performance. Further development of performance measures in forums like the Building Charter School Quality initiative could be greatly enhanced with complementary multi-state analysis such as this first report.

It is important to note that the news for charter schools has some encouraging facets. In our nationally pooled sample, two subgroups fare better in charters than in the traditional system: students in poverty and ELL students. This is no small feat. In these cases, our numbers indicate that charter students who fall into these categories are outperforming their TPS counterparts in both reading and math. These populations, then, have clearly been well served by the introduction of charters into the education landscape. These findings are particularly heartening for the charter advocates who target the most challenging educational populations or strive to improve education options in the most difficult communities. Charter schools that are organized around a mission to teach the most economically disadvantaged students in particular seem to have developed expertise in serving these communities. We applaud their efforts, and recommend that schools or school models demonstrating success be further studied with an eye toward the notoriously difficult process of replication. Further, even for student subgroups in charters that had aggregate learning gains lagging behind their TPS peers, the analysis revealed charter schools in at least one state that demonstrated positive academic growth relative to TPS peers. These higher performers also have lessons to share that could improve the performance of the larger community of charters schools.

The flip-side of this insight should not be ignored either. Students not in poverty and students who are not English language learners on average do notably worse than the same students who remain in the traditional public school system. Additional work is needed to determine the reasons underlying this phenomenon. Perhaps these students are "off-mission" in the schools they attend. Perhaps they are left behind in otherwise high-performing charter schools, or perhaps these findings are a reflection of a large pool of generally underperforming schools. Whatever the reason, the policy community needs to be aware of this dichotomy, and greater attention should be paid to the large number of students not being well served in charter schools.

In addition, we know now that first year charter students suffer a sharp decline in academic growth. Equipped with this knowledge, charter school operators can perhaps take appropriate steps to mitigate or reverse this "first year effect."

Despite promising results in a number of states and within certain subgroups, the overall findings of this report indicate a disturbing — and far-reaching — subset of poorly performing charter schools. If the charter school movement is to flourish, or indeed to deliver on promises made by proponents, a deliberate and sustained effort to increase the proportion of high quality schools is essential. The replication of successful school models is one important element of this effort. On the other side of the equation, however, authorizers must be willing and able to fulfill their end of the original charter school bargain: accountability in exchange for flexibility. When schools consistently fail, they should be closed.

Though simple in formulation, this task has proven to be extremely difficult in practice. Simply put, neither market mechanisms nor regulatory oversight been a sufficient force to deal with

underperforming schools. At present there appears to be an authorizing crisis in the charter school sector. For a number of reasons — many of them understandable — authorizers find it difficult to close poorly performing schools. Despite low test scores, failing charter schools often have powerful and persuasive supporters in their communities who feel strongly that shutting down *this* school does not serve the best interests of currently enrolled students. Evidence of financial insolvency or corrupt governance structure, less easy to dispute or defend, is much more likely to lead to school closures than poor academic performance. And yet, as this report demonstrates, the apparent reluctance of authorizers to close underperforming charters ultimately reflects poorly on charter schools as a whole. More importantly, it hurts students.

Charter schools are already expected to maintain transparency with regard to their operations and academic records, giving authorizers full access. We propose that authorizers be expected to do the same. True accountability demands that the public know the status of each school in an authorizer's portfolio, and that we be able to gauge authorizer performance just as authorizers currently gauge charter performance. To this end, we suggest the adoption of a national set of performance metrics, collected uniformly by all authorizers in order to provide a common base line by which we can compare the performance of charter schools and actions of authorizers across state lines. Using these metrics, Authorizer Report Cards would provide full transparency and put pressure on authorizers to act in clear cases of failure.

The charter school movement to date has concentrated its formidable resources and energy on removing barriers to charter school entry into the market. It is time to concentrate equally on removing the barriers to exit.

Testimony Prepared for September 27, 2011 hearing of theSenate Education Committee Regarding Education Reform Package, SB 618-624

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Background Information Relevant to My Testimony

I am a professor of evaluation, measurement, and research at Western Michigan University. Over the last 2 decades I have had extensive experience evaluating school reforms and education policies in the United States and Europe. I have conducted 9 comprehensive evaluations of charter school reforms commissioned by state education agencies, including two evaluations of Michigan's charter school reform commissioned by MDE. I have undertaken dozens of other studies related to charter schools and private education management organizations (EMOs) that have been funded by the US Department of Education, state agencies, private foundations, as well as by groups that advocate or oppose charter schools. In addition to my direct research or evaluation work related to charter schools, I have provided technical assistance to charter schools in Connecticut, Hawaii, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. This assistance has largely focused on developing accountability systems and helping schools to collect and report data.

In Europe, I have studied the national voucher reform in Sweden and conducted research on school restructuring in other four countries. For the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), I have been serving as an external expert and over the past few years I have worked with a network of OECD countries to develop international indicators related to school choice, parent voice, and school accountability.

In recent years, my research has increasingly focused on education management organizations and efforts to create systemic change in urban schools in Michigan and rural schools in Louisiana. Prior to coming to Western Michigan University in 1997, I worked for 10 years at Stockholm University. Aside from a long list of technical reports, I have authored or edited eight books and have published more than 3 dozen articles or chapters in books.

Original Goals of Charter Schools

Charter schools were created in the early 1990s as a new form of public school that—in exchange for autonomy—would be highly accountable. They would improve upon traditional public schools in two ways: by developing and sharing innovative practices, and by promoting competition. Charter schools have received considerable bipartisan support and have become one of the most prevalent and widely debated school reforms visible in the last several decades. Today there are around 5,000 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia, enrolling close to 1.5 million students.

While I looked favorably upon the original intent of charter schools, I am increasingly concerned that after two decades and substantial growth, the charter school idea has strayed considerably from its original vision.

A growing body of research as well as state and federal evaluations conducted by independent researchers continue to find that charter schools are not achieving the goals that

were once envisioned for them. The specific goals for charter schools are typically found in legislative acts. Let me identify these goals and comment on the related research evidence:

- *Empower local actors and communities.* Involvement of local persons or groups in starting charter schools is shrinking, replaced instead by outsiders, particularly private education management organizations (EMOs), which steer these schools from distant corporate headquarters. Claims that EMOs can make charter schools more effective have not been substantiated by research.
- *Enhance opportunities for parent involvement.* Parents who choose schools can be expected to be more engaged, presumably leading to higher student achievement and other positive outcomes. Evidence suggests that parent satisfaction is one of the strengths of charter schools. Most of this evidence, however, is based on surveys of parents whose children remain in charter schools and excludes parents whose children have left these schools. Nevertheless, the fact that charter schools are growing in size and number is a strong indication of the demand that still exists for charter schools.
- *Create new opportunities for school choice with open access for all.* Charter schools are schools of choice. With few exceptions, they are open to students from any district or locale. Advocates argue that the very act of choice will spur students, parents, and teachers to work harder to support the schools they have chosen. Evidence, however, suggests that charters attract and enroll groups sorted by race, class, ability, and language. Increasingly, charter schools are using admissions or placement tests. Last year, research conducted by Western Michigan University found that only one-quarter of charter schools have students populations that are similar to local school districts in terms of ethnic composition and the proportion of low-income students. When it came to student composition based on students with disabilities or students classified as English language learners the findings were even starker.
- *Develop innovations in curriculum and instruction.* Proponents argued that charter schools could function as public education's R&D sector, and their benefits would extend to traditional public schools that adopted and emulated their innovations. Evidence to date, however, suggests that charter schools are not more likely than traditional public schools to innovate.

  While it is hoped that charter schools can share ideas with traditional public schools, the contracts between private management companies and public charter school boards often stipulate that the all components of the school model, including anything developed by teachers belongs to the private education management organization (EMO) and is deemed proprietary in nature. Contractual provisions such as this make it difficult for charter school boards to fire EMOs—since everything belongs to the private EMO—and it also makes sharing of new ideas with other schools impractical.
- *Enhance professional autonomy and opportunities for professional development for teachers.* Allowing teachers to choose schools closely matching their own beliefs and interests was to create school communities that spent less time managing stakeholder conflicts and more time implementing effective educational interventions. Although some charter schools have created and fostered professional opportunities for teachers, the overall evidence on this goal does not suggest that this has been realized. High levels of teacher attrition suggest teachers are not finding suitable professional learning communities in charter schools.

- *Create high performing schools where children would learn more*. Notwithstanding pressure for performance on state assessments, the growing body of evidence indicates charter schools perform similar to or slightly worse than demographically matched traditional public schools on standardized tests. This is so despite the existence of some exceptional charter schools in every state. In recent years, more comprehensive and rigorous studies of student achievement in charter schools have established more definitively that charter schools' performance is similar to or slightly worse than demographically matched comparison groups.
  - In 2007, we conducted a 6 state study of student achievement across the Great Lake States. Our study found charter schools had lower scores than comparable traditional public schools. Charter schools were gaining more over a five-year longitudinal analysis, but as the performance levels of charter schools approached the performance level of comparison groups their growth trajectory leveled off (Miron, Coryn, & Mackety, 2007).
  - In 2009, a study from Stanford University examined closed to 65% of all charter schools in the country and found that in 17 out of 100 comparisons, charter schools had a statistically significant positive effect. In 37 out of 100 comparisons with matched students, charter schools had statistically significant negative effect. The remaining comparison show so significant differences (CREDO, 2009)
  - In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education released a study it had commissioned Mathematica to complete that cost more than $5 million. This study examined a sample of oversubscribed (i.e., popular) charter schools and compared charter school students to students who were on the waiting list but did not get a place. This longitudinal study showed no overall effect for charter schools (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwoyer, 2010).
  - When summing up the evidence on student achievement in charter schools, it is clear that larger scale studies have negative findings for charter schools while smaller scale studies or case studies tend to have findings that are more positive. Similarly, studies commissioned by the US Department of Education and state education agencies tend to be more negative, while studies by independent researchers, advocacy groups, and think tanks tend to be more positive.
- *Create highly accountable schools*. In exchange for enhanced autonomy over curriculum, instruction, and operations, charter schools agree to be held more accountable for results than other public schools. Schools that fail to meet performance objectives can have their charter revoked or not renewed (performance accountability); schools that do not satisfy parents may lose students and, in theory, go out of business (market accountability). Yet closure rates are relatively low, and most charter schools that close do so because of financial mismanagement, rather than performance or market accountability. The burden of producing evidence regarding charter school success has shifted to external evaluators or authorizers. Charter schools—on the whole—have not been proactive with regard to accountability; instead of being "evaluating" schools, they have become "evaluated" schools.

Reasons Why Goals for Charter Schools Have Not Been Achieved

Why this overall lackluster performance?

- *Lack of effective oversight and insufficient accountability*. Many authorizers lack funds for oversight and some of them are unprepared and—in some cases—unwilling to be sponsors of charter schools. A key factor that undermines effective oversight is that objectives in charter

contracts are vague, incomplete, and unmeasurable. Between 2002 and 2008 more attention was given to the role and importance of authorizers, however, today the focus has shifted to increasing the number of authorizers or the routes through which charter schools can be authorized.

- *Insufficient autonomy*. Re-regulation and standardization driven by NCLB and state assessments are limiting autonomy. Requirements that charter schools administer the same standardized tests and have the same performance standards as traditional public schools means that they cannot risk developing and using new curricular materials.

- *Insufficient funding*. The financial viability of charter schools is dependent on the state, on how facilities are funded, and on the particular needs of the students served. Some charter schools maintain large year-end balances thanks to less costly-to-educate students or extensive private revenues; others are clearly underfunded for the types of students they serve or because they lack social capital to attract outside resources, or both. Funding formulae vary by state, but a national charter school finance study we conducted in 2010 revealed that difference in revenues between charter schools and local districts could be explained by spending for children with disabilities, student support services, transportation and food services. This finance study also revealed that charter schools spend more on administration and administrative salaries and that only about half the dollars they receive are devoted to instruction-related costs, compared to 60% of the dollars that traditional public schools receive.

  Although charter schools, on average, receive comparable amounts of public revenues given for the students they serve, it is reasonable to note that if charter schools are expected to innovate they would likely need more funding, not just greater autonomy.

- *Privatization and pursuit of profits*. The increasing numbers of private operators may bring expertise or experience, but they also glean high management fees and tend to spend less on instruction—and reports continue to show that EMO-operated schools perform less well than non-EMO operated schools. There is evidence that one nonprofit EMO model (KIPP) is successful at improving performance of students that persist, but a study conducted earlier this year revealed that the success of the KIPP model was dependent on selective entry, selective exit (i.e., high attrition of lower performing students), plus an average of $6,500 more per pupil in public and private revenues relative to local district schools.

- *Strong and effective lobbying and advocacy groups* for charter schools quickly reinterpret research and shape the message to fit their needs rather than the long-term interests of the movement. They attack evidence that questions the performance of charter schools and offer anecdotal evidence, rarely substantiated by technical reports, in rebuttal. Such lobbying has undermined reasoned discourse and made improving charter schools more difficult.

- *High attrition of teachers and administrators*, ranging from 15 to 30 percent, leads to greater instability and lost investment. Attrition from the removal of ineffective teachers—a potential plus of charters—explains only a small portion of the annual exodus. Many charter schools, especially those operated by private EMOs have shifted to scripted instruction as a way to minimize the impact of high teacher attrition.

- *Rapid growth of reforms*. In states that implemented and expanded their charter school reforms too quickly, charter schools have faced a backlash as shortcomings in oversight and other neglected aspects of the reform become apparent. The states that have grown their reforms more slowly have been able to learn from early mistakes and establish better oversight mechanisms.

  The results from the Stanford study (CREDO, 2009) show that states with large numbers of charter schools, states that "grew" their charter school reform too quickly, and states that have a higher proportion of its schools operated by for-profit EMOs were more likely to be included in the group of lower performing states (Miron & Applegate, 2009).

Questions Policy Makers Should be Asking

Can we create better public schools through de-regulation and demands for greater accountability? How are charter schools using the opportunity provided them? The answers to these questions require comprehensive evaluations—resisting the dodge that every charter school is its own reform and should be looked at separately. More specific questions that policy makers should be asking include:

- How can charter school laws be revised to create more accountable schools?
- Can funding formulae be revised to ensure that charter schools serving the neediest students receive sufficient funding, motivating more charters to attract and retain more-costly-to-educate students, such as high school students, those with special needs, and those living in poverty?
- How can incentives and regulations be used to ensure poorly performing charter schools will be closed?
- Are there better uses for public resources than charter schools—quality preschool, smaller class size, increased teacher remuneration or incentives, increased oversight of public schools, support to restructure struggling or failing district schools, etc.?

Who Stole My Charter School Reform?

Even as the original goals for charter schools are largely ignored, charter schools fulfill other purposes, mainly serving as a vehicle to promote privatization and further segregate our public schools.

- *Promote privatization of public school system*. Charter schools have provided an easy route for privatization; many states allow private schools to convert to public charter schools, and increasing the use of private education management organizations is increasingly being seen as the mode for expanding charter schools.

  Today, one-third of the nation's charter schools are being operated by private education management organizations (EMOs) and this proportion is growing rapidly each year. In Michigan, close to 80% of charter schools are operated by private for-profit EMOs. Claims regarding privatization remain rhetorical and unsupported by evidence. The recent economic

crisis has shown that our economy requires greater public oversight and regulations, a finding that can be reasonably extended to markets in education.

While the supply of new independent charter schools has slowed due to natural factors such as limited supply of local people who are willing to establish a new school, coupled with the overall weak performance of charter schools to date. The charter school establishment and the corporate interests of private education management organizations is now being coupled in terms of lobbying for expansion of charter schools and an increasingly common solution that the mechanism for expansion is private EMOs.

The private involvement is complicating and undermining the charter school idea. First of all, private management undermines local control and autonomy since the impetus for the schools comes from the EMO, and the EMOs steer its schools often from across the state or across the country. Furthermore, transparency is negatively impacted by the veil of privacy, and charter school boards become dependent on their contractor (i.e., the EMO) to share and report data on its own performance.

- *Means of accelerating segregation of public schools while placing the "Private Good" ahead of the "Public Good."* State evaluations consistently find that charter schools accelerate the re-segregation of public schools by race, class, ability, and language, instead of creating homogeneous learning communities based on particular learning styles or pedagogical approaches. In 2010, two national studies conducted by The Civil Rights Project and Western Michigan University have presented a more comprehensive picture of the impact of charter schools in terms of fragmenting and segregating our public schools.

If privatization and accelerated segregation are not outcomes that our state wishes to achieve with charter schools, then it would be wise to reconsider or revise SB 618-624. Instead, it would be helpful for state policy makers need to revisit the goals and intended purpose of charter schools, clearly articulating values and anticipated outcomes.

Quality versus Quantity

Once dedicated to educational quality, today's charter school movement is increasingly dominated by powerful advocates of market-based reform and privatization in public education.

As you consider how it wishes to steer and develop charter schools, it would be wise to articulate a new—or renewed—vision for chartering that focuses on quality over quantity. In line with this, revisions can be made in our charter school law that reflect the original goals and values to which charter schools were supposed to aspire.

Finally, I would encourage you to move more aggressively to close poorly performing charter schools. This will strengthen our charter reform in four ways: lifting the aggregate results for charters that remain; sending a strong message to other charter schools that the autonomy-for-accountability tradeoff is real; redirecting media attention from scandal-ridden schools to successful schools; and opening up space for new, carefully vetted charters.

Although these suggestions may be seen as antagonistic by the charter school establishment, I believe they will help improve and strengthen such schools in the longer run. The charter school idea was to create better schools for all children, not to divide limited public resources across parallel systems that perform at similar levels and suffer from similar breaches

in accountability. Rapid proliferation in the charter sector appears to be interfering with the original vision for the schools: to serve as a lever of change, spurring public schools to improve both by example and through competition. But if they are to do so, they must be better than traditional public schools, and they must be held accountable for their performance.

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